



191 Main Street
Old Saybrook, CT 06475
860.388.9513
www.hope-ct.org

February 5, 2015

Testimony for Connecticut General Assembly Housing Committee

Good evening Chairman Butler, Chairman Holder-Winfield, Sen. Hwang, Rep. Kupchick, Honorable Members of the Housing Committee.

My name is Lauren Ashe and I am the Executive Director of HOPE Partnership, a housing policy and advocacy organization in southeastern Connecticut that has successfully worked with town residents, community organizations and municipal officials to create affordable housing in our region of the state. We are actively involved in Clinton, Essex, Old Lyme and other municipalities and were part of the team that created the first housing in an Incentive Housing Zone in the State, 16 units at Ferry Crossing in Old Saybrook.

I am here this evening to oppose HB5055, 5306, 5577, 5579, 5581 and the many other bills related to the 8-30g statute that would repeal or seriously weaken it. While I am not an expert on the 8-30g statute, I am aware that it has successfully sparked the creation of thousands of affordable homes across the state, and thousands more modest market-rate units in mixed-income developments. In Old Saybrook, Westbrook & Essex, we have four approved 8-30g developments; two are occupied, one in construction phase, and the other in development phase. Whittier Place, Ethan's Landing, Between the Bridges and Essex Elderly and Affordable Housing will add over 50 affordable units to the housing stock in our area that would otherwise not exist, due to zoning and site restrictions. This speaks to the need for quality, affordable housing. There was little to no opposition to these developments due to open communication with Town leaders and zoning commissions.

In Old Saybrook the implementation of 8-30g was the catalyst for a remarkable collaboration among town residents to create an Incentive Housing Zone under the HOMEConnecticut program, on which Ferry Crossing was built. Our municipal

officials were aware of our shortage of affordable housing and used the HOMEConnecticut statute's outline for Incentive Housing Zones to begin to deal with that shortage.

I am sure you are well aware of the severe shortage of affordable housing in the state. Connecticut had a shortage of nearly 91,000 units that were both available and affordable for those earning 30% of the median income or less last year, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition. In other words, there were only 37 affordable units available for every 100 households who needed them!

I have seen the demand for affordable housing up close. When word spread in Old Saybrook that 16 units would be available at Ferry Crossing, we received 53 applicants from qualified families. Even now, there is a waiting list of 47 households. The affordable units in the 8-30g developments were sold before the market rate units.

As for the fears many have about affordable housing, the people living there are good people. They take care of their homes, live together in harmony, are great neighbors and wouldn't move unless they had to.

We need affordable homes in our state if we are going to keep our young professionals and families, help our workers and our economy, enhance the education of our children and improve the quality of life across Connecticut. I implore you not to weaken the statute that has pushed many towns to create this much needed housing.